

MEETING NOTES
Androscoggin Riverlands State Park
Advisory Committee Meeting #1
 April 29, 2009
 Leeds Town Office

ATTENDANCE:

Initials	Name	Interest Represented/ email
JG	Jody Goodwin	Town of Turner jodyike@megalink.net
JW	Jane Wheeler	Clerk, Town of Leeds townofleeds@fairpoint.net
CN	Charlie Noonan	Town Manager, Town of Leeds tmgreene@fairpoint.net
DB	Doug Beck	Auburn Parks & Recreation dbeck@ci.auburn.me.us
DH	David Hediger	City Planner, City of Lewiston dhediger@ci.lewiston.me.us
JLB	Jonathan P. LaBonte	Executive Director ALT jlabonte@androscogginlandtrust.org
FL	Fergus Lee	Chair AR Watershed ouncil flea@avcog.org
NW	Neil Ward	Director, Androscoggin River Alliance nward@fairpoint.net
ED	Ernie DeLuca	Recreation Manager NextERA Energy Resources Ernest.m.deluca@nexteraenergy.com
GD	Guy Desjardins	Sheriff Androscoggin County sheriffandyso@roadrunner.com
EM	Ed Morris	President, Turner Ridge Riders Morris1@megalink.net
LR	Larry Robinson	President, Turner Timberland ATV Club
MS	Mike Spugnardi	Trailmaster, Turner Timberland ATV Club spsigns@megalink.net
RB	Roy Boies	Interim Conservation Director, ME Bass Foundation bassinray@hotmail.com
JV	John Volkernick	Maine Bass Federation Nation - Alternate androscogginbassmasters@yahoo.com
SM	Stephen Mohr	Mohr & Seredin Landscape Architects Inc. smohr@mohrseredin.com
TS	Tatyanna Seredin	Mohr & Seredin Landscape Architects Inc. tseredin@mohrseredin.com

GP	George Powell	Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands George.Powell@maine.gov
RH	Ron Hunt	Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands Ron.hunt@maine.gov
WH	Will Harris	Director, Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands Will.harris@maine.gov
KE	Kathy Eickenberg	Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands Katherine.eickenberg@maine.org
JW	Joe Wiley	ME IF&W and DOC Joe.wiley@maine.gov
BF	Bruce Farnum	ME Bureau of Parks and Lands Bruce.farnham@maine.gov
BB	Brian Bronson	ME Bureau of Parks and Lands Brian.Bronson @Maine.gov

AGENDA

Welcome, Introductions - *Will Harris, Director, Bureau of Parks and Lands*

Presentations:

Overview of the Planning Process and Bureau Activities related to the Riverlands during 2008– *Kathy Eickenberg, Chief of Planning; Stephen Mohr, Mohr & Seredin, Landscape Planning Consultants*

Androscoggin River Coalition: A Vision for the Future of the River – *Jonathan LaBonte, Androscoggin Land Trust*

The Androscoggin River Water Trail – *Fergus Lea, Androscoggin River Watershed Council*

Questions/ Discussion: Interests of the Advisory Committee Members

Planning for the Public Scoping Meeting (May)

Next steps – Schedule for 2nd Advisory Committee Meeting (June)

1.0 Introduction and Presentations:

- 4.1 Will Harris (WH), Director of the Bureau of Parks and Lands, began the meeting with a general introduction that noted that this will be the first new State Park created in over 20 years. The Bureau wants to make sure that the process for the design of the new park is public and inclusive so that the Bureau can learn from the large coalition of recreational groups that have an interest in the park. WH wants to make sure that everyone with an interest has the opportunity to participate in the master planning process. The Bureau's goal is to better serve all the various recreational needs and to create a facility that is designed to blend harmoniously with the natural environment.
- 4.2 Kathy Eickenberg (KE), Chief of Planning for the Bureau of Parks and Lands, presented a brief PowerPoint presentation that provided the Committee members with an overview of the work to date, and the process that the Bureau wants to follow to create the master plan. KE expressed her opinion that the Riverlands are underutilized, and hopes that the planning process will help make the public more aware of this unpolished gem in close proximity to Lewiston and Auburn.

KE explained the Bureau's intent of having the public involved in the process to help define the scope of the park and to assist in creating a vision for the Riverlands. The Advisory Committee will be involved at key points to help shape and guide the master plan for the park. KE noted that the Bureau is open to designing the park to create a facility that meets the public's needs and may be totally different than traditional state parks. KE handed out project binders for all Committee members, and noted that they basically replicate what can be found on the new website for the riverlands which was noted on the agenda handed out at the meeting [www.maine.gov/doc/parks]. KE then explained the acquisition history of the parcel, touched on the natural resources information assembled for the parcel, and outlined the contents of the binder. It was noted that the Riverlands parcel is part of the largest block of un-fragmented wildlife habitat in Androscoggin County.

- 4.3 Stephen Mohr (SM), of Mohr & Seredin, spoke about the public nature of this process and how it differs from the planning process for parks that were created in the past. M&S will be working with the Committee to help the Committee and the public to shape a vision for the park and will develop a master plan for the Riverlands that synthesizes the ideas of the public and the Committee. The final work product will be a template for the general guidance for the development of the Riverlands Park. SM noted that the Riverlands is a unique property in that it has significant acreage, length, water frontage on the river and a unique context with the potential links to the urban centers of Lewiston and Auburn.

- 4.4 Jonathan LaBonte (JLB) spoke to the Committee and reviewed a PowerPoint presentation that puts the Riverlands in context, and explained the importance of the Riverlands as adding to the region's quality of place. JLB emphasized that one of the important elements of the Riverlands is its ability to attract people to this part of Maine as a place to live and work. JLB noted that it is nationally recognized that active communities that have significant opportunities like the Riverlands attract people as well as new businesses, families, and related economic opportunities.

JLB noted several important facts about the Androscoggin River which include the following:

- The river was noted in a national magazine as the best, and most overlooked, small mouth bass fishery north of Missouri.
- The Bates College crew boathouse is on Gulf Island Pond in Greene.
- A recent Olympic medalist in rowing trained on the Androscoggin River.
- The Androscoggin Land Trust (ALT) has been working on this parcel for 20 years and was one of the key players that helped to bring people together to get the Riverlands parcel acquired for public use.

JLB explained that the Riverlands is significant in the context that it provides to the nearby urban areas, and it provides land and water connections for the adjacent towns of Turner, Leeds and Greene. There are existing utility corridors that provide potential connection for foot and bicycle traffic into the downtown areas, and the Riverlands has the opportunity to provide connectivity of Lewiston and Auburn to the areas upriver of the Androscoggin River Park.

JLB feels that the Riverlands is important as a place to reconnect the public with natural resources while also providing opportunities for the in-town residents of Lewiston and Auburn for recreational uses not found in the urban centers. JLB noted the neighborhood cleanup efforts of the immigrant population; the potential for a wellness and health awareness component as well

as expanding other partnership opportunities like that of the water safety training with the Sheriff's Department.

- 4.5 Fergus Lea (FL) is the Chair of the Androscoggin River Watershed Council and he spoke about the history of the use of the Androscoggin as a waterway to connect the mountains to the ocean. This dates back to 1983 when the State and the County along with the Androscoggin River Council emphasized the potential for the river to provide economic, recreational opportunity and natural resource preservation. FL noted the funding in 1990 by the Maine DEP for a staff person, the 1990 conference on the Greenway/Water Trail associated with the river and the founding of the Watershed Council in 1999. Since 1995 there has been a paddle trek from Lake Umbagog to Merrymeeting Bay. There are 46 sites on the river that area available for the public's use and the Water Trail has been recognized as a significant factor linking portions of the Androscoggin River to other parts of Maine. FL spoke to need for a vision of a broader recreation corridor along the river that includes not just the Water Trail, but walking trails, multi-use trails and other recreational opportunities being linked to the river.

2.0 Interests and Concerns of the Advisory Committee Members:

With the above points as an introduction to the project, Kathy E. opened up the discussion to the rest of the Advisory Committee to learn about each committee member's vision and hopes for the property:

- 2.1 Ed Morris, President of Turner Ridge Riders, a snowmobile club based in Turner, Maine.
- The Androscoggin Riverlands has always been known, ever since he can remember, as 'The Game Preserve';
 - This parcel has very good groomed snowmobile trails in the winter;
 - He would like to see this area include some winter destinations for snowmobile riders. An example would be enhancements at the spring to fill canteens, or a scenic place to picnic.
- 2.2 Jonathan LaBonte, Executive Director of the Androscoggin Land Trust.
- JLB sees this parcel as being very important for its connectivity to surrounding areas;
 - He would like to see appropriate development at the southern end of the parcel due to its proximity to the urban centers of Lewiston / Auburn;
 - Would like to someday be able to get a shuttle from one end to the other for paddling on the river. He would like to see improved landings on the shore with picnic areas and hiking loops accessed only from the water.
- 2.3 Jody Goodwin, representing the Town of Turner
- Wants to make sure that the Community of Turner is not disenfranchised. This property has served as open / recreation space for a long time for the local population for traditional uses such as hunting, ATV's and snowmobiles, and she wants to make sure that these traditions are able to continue;
 - Loves the idea of a walking trail connecting to other areas, and being able to have a family outing to walk from this park all the way into L/A;
 - This property is a valuable wilderness area. More and more privately owned, undeveloped properties are not allowing access, and as the area is becoming more densely populated, less land is accessible;

- This should always remain a place where families can go walk a trail, not see any houses, and see wildlife such as otters, eagles, etc. Wants her great grandchildren to enjoy these lands and the wildlife as she does.
- 2.4 Doug Beck, Auburn Parks and Recreation
- This area is very important for its proximity to the larger populations in L/A. Current recreation trends show that there are immediate needs for a day trip wilderness experience closer to home rather than week long trips elsewhere;
 - Family outdoor recreation is undergoing national growth, and this park will serve this need for the State.
- 2.5 Charlie Noonan, Town Manager, Greene
- There is a very large percentage of people in Greene who aren't aware that this is state-owned land;
 - Wants to make sure that this parcel isn't over-developed. He wants to make sure that it still serves the hunting and snowmobiling needs of the area;
 - He is excited about the potential for access via a potential new boat ramp at Cherry Pond opposite the state lands in Greene;
 - People are very excited about this new park, everyone wants to know 'when?'. The plan needs to move forward and be implemented. Expects the public will turn out and support this.
- 2.6 Guy Desjardins, Sheriff, Androscoggin County
- His department is a resource for water safety;
 - He is a pilot – flies out of Auburn;
 - He is concerned with public safety at this site;
 - John LaBonte (who is also a County Commissioner) added that the Sheriff's Department is the public safety organization for the small towns along the river. The surrounding public safety infrastructure from the state, county and municipalities will need to be coordinated to serve this park;
 - There are rescue boats available from Auburn and Poland, but only one access point on the river, on the Center Bridge Road in Turner. Another access point at the southern end would be helpful.
 - Guy mentioned that the River has improved and even he was not aware of what a great resource it was until he attended an event at the Rancourt Preserve last year (ALT land below the Deer Rips Dam in Lewiston).
- 2.7 Larry Robinson, President, Turner Timberland ATV Club
- He feels there will be opportunities in the future to increase the park lands further south to connect with trails in Auburn.
 - He feels that the river is not used enough. Larry lives on the Waterman Road below the state lands near the river and is on the pond nearly every day in the summer in his boat; his kids even swim in the river. He notes that except for the bass fishing events, he hardly sees anyone else.
 - He uses the river every season, including ice fishing in the winter. He noted you can see baby eagles from the river;
 - He would like to see additional parking area developed at the south end to serve the park.
- 2.8 Neil Ward, Program Director, Androscoggin River Alliance

- Neil's focus on the river has been primarily water quality. People have historically turned away from the river due to the pollution, but that is changing.
- There used to be a stigma attached to the river because it was polluted, and it smelled bad. This stigma is very hard to overcome, especially for the generations who grew up with the river so polluted;
- A good example is Neil's wife who grew up on the river, but who had never experienced the river until being taken on a boat when she was an adult – and instantly fell in love with it;
- He would like to reintroduce the neighboring communities to the river, now that it's getting clean. He would especially like to attract the next generation to the river to begin a good, positive, sustainable relationship with it.

2.9 Ray Boies, Interim Conservation Director, Maine Bass Federation Nation

- He is representing several fishing organizations, the organizations are concerned with safety first.
- In 1990 held the first club bass fishing tournament on the river; now pike are in the river, and that is drawing more interest.
- The river has excellent small and large mouth bass fishing. The state fish-off is a 2 day event held here with 80-100 boats averaging two persons per boat. Up to five fish per boat – this is a very productive fishery to sustain this catch.
- This park will attract a lot of people who will bring revenue to the region; if tenting was an option, it would get used.
- This is a community oriented organization with a big focus on kids with lots of programs for them. This park will serve children and community.
- Ray remarked that he never knew much about the state lands, but he saw from the slides presented that it is beautiful and he will be doing some walks there..

2.10 Ernie DeLuca, Recreation Manager, NextEra Energy Resources, Inc.

- He can help, through NextERA with providing connectivity.

2.11 Mike Spugnardi, Trailmaster, Turner Timberland ATV Club

- Agrees with Jody, he thinks this park is going to be a positive step;
- There is more snowmobiling taking place on the parcel right now than ATV riding.
- There has been a drop in ATV riding because of access changes.

2.12 Ron Hunt, Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands, acting Southern Regional Park Manager

- He is here to listen and to help;
- His concerns have to do with how the Bureau will manage and maintain new amenities and increased use of the park.

2.13 John Volkernick, Maine Bass Federation Nation

- He would like to see water levels stay more consistent, especially from May through the 3rd week in June during spawning season;
- Would like to see buoys to mark hazardous places in the river;
- There are pike in the river up to 25 lbs. in size; ice fishing is taking the larger pike out of the river. He would like to see this fishery managed for large fish.
- Would like to see habitat improved for spawning – such as brush piles;

- Would like to see a boat launch and parking area at the south end of the park.

3.0 General Discussion

3.1 Neil Ward

- Noted the economic benefit of the fishery. The bass fish-off is a 100 boat event, with 2 people per boat, people will need places to stay such as hotels and camping spots;
- He noted that the water draw-down kills lots of wildlife;

3.2 Jonathan LaBonte

- JLB wants to make sure that this process addresses the issues comprehensively and is not restricted by who governs activities on the water vs. the land. The Bureau, the Sheriff and the Game Warden all need to work together.
- The planning process needs to respect private property rights of abutters.
- JBL emphasized the need to engage abutters in direct communications, even walking the common lot lines with them.

3.3 Ron Hunt

- He was just at a meeting about the Saco River where people are trying to 'take our river back'. He wants to make sure that this will be a family river, not a party river;
- There is the need for a coordinated effort between all enforcement agencies as noted by JLB.

3.4 Jody Goodwin

- Wants the planning process to look sensitively at town's contributions. Turner already has a motorized boat launch, and wants to be careful about adding another one;
- The Turner folks on Conant Road are OK with a carry-in boat landing and parking, but not adding another motorized boat launch in Turner (they already have one at the Center Bridge Road);
- She wants to make sure that it is a priority to retain the natural flora of Maine, and maybe add additional plantings where appropriate – maybe along the Homestead Trail?

3.5 Joe Wiley, IFW and DOC

- The connectivity to the north is critical for wildlife. He would like to make sure that a key wildlife corridor is unfragmented and undeveloped;
- Talawala Preserve in Livermore is another natural resource that the wildlife corridor runs through, and to;
- The riparian zone is fragile and needs protection from over use.

3.6 Jonathan LaBonte

- His vision for this park is to keep its wild character, and maybe we don't have to do everything on this parcel, but build around it with more conservation lands to serve the bigger agenda for large-block wildlife habitat connecting to important lands further north;
- JLB would like to see the property line marked and blazed;

3.7 Will Harris

- There is an increasing amount of outdoor recreation need for kids;
- Will noted that people support what they use;

- This property is inviting and offers good opportunities for a wide range of recreational uses;
 - The use of state parks is down nationally from a high in 2002, but Maine has stayed fairly high. Use in 2007 was very high, and 2008 was down, probably due to rainy weekends.
- 3.8 Jody Goodwin
- This property could be used as an outdoor, ecology classroom, and could be used by the area schools. There are vernal pools, wetlands, etc, and the kids will value the resources if they learn about them;
 - The Center Bridge Road parking lot is within 4 miles of all schools in Turner.
- 3.9 Ed Morris
- There is a lot of snowmobile traffic, but no dedicated/easement for a trail connection to the Riverlands at the north or south ends;
 - What about access from the Old County Road at the north end? Presently is used, but would like to make improvements. JG to check on legal status of road. JW stated he does not think the State has an easement over the Old County Road;
 - EM wants to make sure snowmobile use/trails and connections are considered.
- 3.10 Kathy Eickenberg
- spoke about the June 6th “Take a Hike” event. She hopes that those that can attend, will do so at AR.
 - Noted Bruce Farnham will be the contact person from “Field” perspective of work on the ground at AR. He will be working with the Ameri Corps person at AR.
 - Brian Bronson from the Bureau’s Off-Road Vehicle is also a resource for issues related to the multi-use trails. He mentioned that there is dumping of trash occasionally at the parking lot.
 - Sheriff Guy Desjardins said that he can provide general work crews for trash pick-up with several months notice.

4.0 Moving Forward:

4.1 Public Meeting:

KE stated that the public scoping meeting would be the next issue for public involvement. After discussion it was agreed that it will be on May 20th at the Leavitt School in Turner.

Charlies Noonan agreed to arrange for this meeting to be broadcast to the four area towns on the community TV channel. The purpose of the meeting is to listen and gather more information on use and to understand the public’s point of view. There will be boards set-up to provide background information on the resources at AR.

JG would like to see someone buy a flip chart and make notes of the public input during the meeting.

Ferg Leas offered to look into getting public transportation to the meeting from Lewiston/Auburn.

4.2 Next Advisory Committee Meeting and Site Tour:

Following the public scoping meeting there will be another Advisory Committee (AC) meeting to discuss the public input and review the AC's responses.

KE discussed an AC site visit and boat tour/walk. After discussing this it was agreed that this was a good idea, and a ½ day boat tour and walking tour would be planned for mid June. Larry Robinson volunteered the use of his boat and to look into borrowing another boat for the trip. Ernie DeLuca volunteered NextEra Energy's 20-foot Lund if needed. The possibility of landing at certain points to walk around or travel by ORV on nearby trails was also suggested. It was agreed that a date would be selected when the group convenes for the Public Meeting.

Meeting notes prepared by Mohr & Seredin Landscape Architects and reviewed by Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands. Please notify us within 7 days of any inaccuracies in these notes.